GUIDE TO THE NQ18 PAWNEE FILE

[The Pawnee are a Plains tribe of the Caddoan linguistic stock whose traditional territory centered in the valleys of the Loup and Platte Rivers, and along the Republican River, in what became the state of Nebraska. They occupied this area throughout their known history until they moved to a reservation in Indian Territory (later Oklahoma) in 1874-1875 (cf. 11: Wedel, pp. ix, 4). Their population was estimated as around 9 to 10,000 in the early part of the 19th century. Subsequently, their population underwent a steady decline, probably due in large part to warfare and newly introduced diseases. Thus in 1859 they had an estimated population of about 4,000; this dropped to about 2,000 in 1876, and down to 650 in 1900 (cf. 2: Lesser, pp. 3, 31, 40, 122). This population trend was reversed during the first quarter of the 20th century.

Although the Pawnee are generally classified within the Plains culture area, they differed significantly in their mode of life from the classic Plains tribes such as the Arapaho or Cheyenne. The Pawnee were essentially a settled, agricultural people occupying large, relatively permanent, earth-lodge villages. Their staple crops were maize, beans, squash, and pumpkin. The introduction of the horse stimulated a tendency toward a nomadic, buffalo-hunting mode of life, but this remained a definitely secondary pattern. As 6: Linton (p. 3) points out, maize played a much more important part than the buffalo in their ceremonies and mythology.

The Pawnee were divided into four politically independent population groups, each comprised of a variable number of villages. The four main groups, generally called "bands" in the ethnographic literature, are named (1) the Chaui (Tcawi) or Grand (often designated as Panis in the earlier literature); (2) the Kitkehahki or Republican; (3) the Pitahauerat or Tappage; and (4) the Skidi or Wolf (known in the early literature as the Panimaha). Although these bands were politically independent, endogamous units, the Chaui were generally recognized as the leading band, and where situations arose involving relationships between the several bands, or the tribe as a whole, the principal chief of the Chaui acted as spokesman and adviser for the entire tribe (cf. 11: Wedel, p. 3). The Skidi evidently considered themselves as rather distinct from the other three bands, and actually felt closer to the Arikara.

The political structure of the band seems to have been best described for the Skidi. In the early 19th century the Skidi constituted a federation of some 13 villages held together by a governing council of chiefs and a ceremonial organization involving common participation in a ceremonial cycle. Each component village had a chief and presumably some kind of council (cf. 5: Dorsey and Murie, p. 75).

This political structure was integrated with a fairly elaborate ranking system which included a series of class-like hierarchical divisions: at the top was the nobility consisting of chiefs, warriors, priests, and medicine-men; then came the commoners, people without influence or power, who probably constituted less than half the members of a band; and below them came the semi-outcastes, persons who had violated tribal laws or customs, and who lived on the outskirts of the villages. Traditionally there was also a category of slaves, who were often incorporated into the tribe, if they had been captured from other tribes (cf. 5: Dorsey and Murie, p. 111ff).

Four ~~Thirteen~~ sources, all in English, have been processed for this file, but none of these sources constitutes a basic, comprehensive ethnography - nor is such an ethnography available in the extant literature. Probably the closest to this is ~~6.~~ Weltfish, The Lost Universe (1965), ~~which is being processed.~~ Another significant factor which should be considered when evaluating the Pawnee literature is that the main early ethnographers of the Pawnee, namely Fletcher, Dorsey, and Densmore, all used James R. Murie, a member of the Skidi band, as a key informant and assistant or collaborator. And Murie himself has published. Undoubtedly related to this fact is the greater amount of data which seems to be available on the Skidi than on the other bands - five sources (nos. 4 through 9) deal almost entirely with the Skidi, while source no. 3 is based partly on Skidi data.

The earliest source in the file in terms of field date is 10: Smith, by a missionary who observed the Pawnee in 1851. This is a brief article with descriptions of miscellaneous ethnographic topics, but it is important because the data come from the period before major cultural changes occured under White influences. Next comes 13: Morgan, dealing superficially with a few topics such as kinship, burials, and the division of the Pawnee into 4 bands. The third earliest source is 12: Grinnell, dating from the period 1870-1885. He describes a summer buffalo hunt, the role of Pawnee scouts for the U.S. Army, and gives some examples of Pawnee literature and mythology.

At the turn of the century, we have the first major ethnographic work done by Fletcher. She observed the Hako ceremony among the Chaui band, and in 1: Fletcher presents a detailed description of this ceremony, including the songs, dances, rituals, symbolism, and meaning. Fletcher is followed by the collaborative field work of Dorsey and Murie (1903-1907), focusing primarily on the Skidi band. 5: Dorsey and Murie is probably the key source in this file from the standpoint of Pawnee social organization. It includes a description of band, village, and family organization, kinship relations, status and "class" distinctions, the life cycle, and the major crimes and their punishment. A good complementary source is 4: Murie, which deals mainly with associations such as the sacred bundle societies, the medicinemen's societies, and modern ceremonies including the ghost dance and the peyote ritual. Scattered through this source is also a fair amount of data on sociopolitical organization. Four short articles by Linton are based on Dorsey's field notes, each describing a major ceremony among the Skidi (cf. nos. 6-9). 3: Densmore is a thorough analysis of Pawnee songs and music based on data obtained from members of the Skidi and Chaui bands.

2: Lesser is another valuable source based on field work in 1930-1931. It is primarily a description of the Ghost Dance hand game among the Pawnee, but in the first part of the book, Lesser presents an excellent account of Indian-White relations and Pawnee culture history during the 19th century, including the acquisition and cultural significance of the Ghost Dance.

~~Finally,~~ 11: Wedel provides a detailed and thorough study of Pawnee archeology and culture history, including a complete description of early Pawnee material culture based mainly on the artifacts collected.

Finally, 14: Weltfish provides background data on Pawnee history and culture, while the bulk of the volume is devoted to a reconstruction of the daily and seasonal round of a group of ~~Pawnee~~ Nebraska Pawnee in the year 1867. The file was processed between 1960 and 1972.]

~~Processed in 1960-1969~~ ~~Revised File Guide prepared in 1971~~ by Robert O. Lagacé